Iran Update, December 5, 2023

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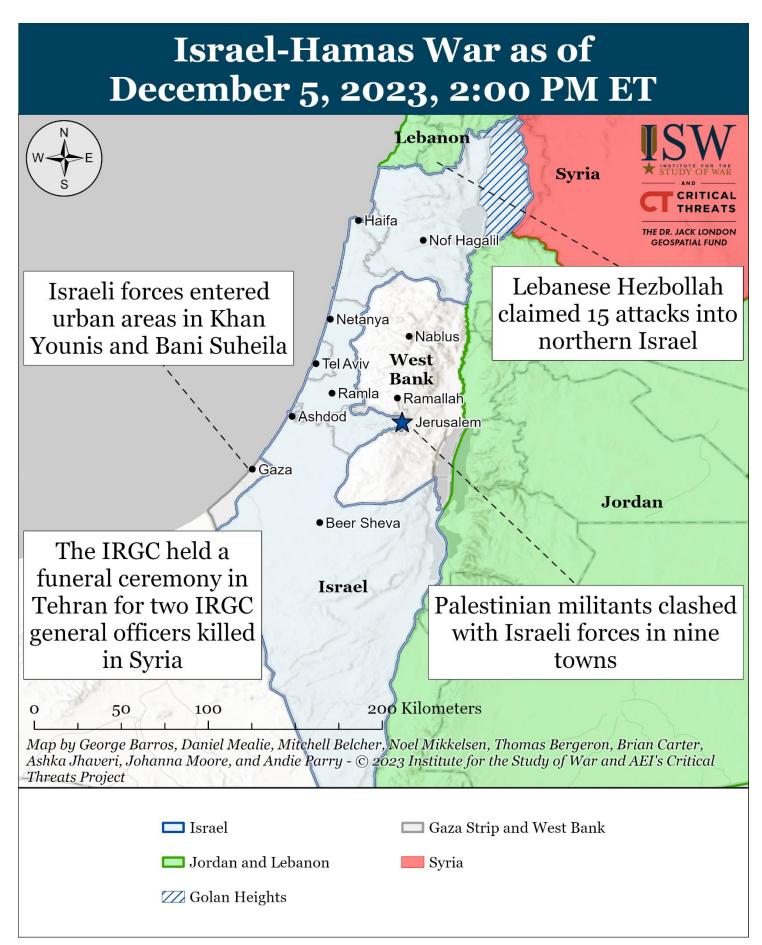
The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decisionmaking of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provides these updates regularly based on regional events. For more on developments in Iran and the region, see our interactive map of Iran and the Middle East.

Note: CTP and ISW have refocused the update to cover the Israel-Hamas war. The new sections address developments in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria, as well as noteworthy activity from Iran's Axis of Resistance. We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We utterly condemn violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

Click here to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

Key Takeaways:

- 1. Palestinian militia fighters continued to use more sophisticated tactics to target Israeli forces throughout the Gaza Strip.
- 2. Israeli forces moved eastward and secured the Salah al Din Road south of Deir al Balah on or before December 3.
- 3. Israeli forces entered urban areas in Khan Younis and Bani Suheila. Palestinian militia forces, including the al Qassem Brigades and the al Quds Brigades, are attempting to resist the Israeli advance into Khan Younis governorate.
- 4. Israeli forces continued their advance into Jabalia and Shujaiya.
- 5. Palestinian militias in the Gaza Strip conducted nine indirect fire attacks into Israel.
- 6. Israeli forces and Palestinian fighters clashed in nine towns across the West Bank.
- 7. Lebanese Hezbollah claimed 15 attacks into Israeli territory from Lebanon.
- 8. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps held a funeral ceremony in Tehran for two IRGC Quds Force general officers killed in Syria.
- 9. US CENTCOM reported that unspecified actors launched 15 122mm rockets from Iraq at the US forces at the Rumalyn Landing Zone in Syria on December 3.
- 10. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian and Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov agreed to cooperate toward undermining international sanctions.



Gaza Strip Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Erode the will of the Israeli political establishment and public to launch and sustain a major ground operation into the Gaza Strip
- Degrade IDF material and morale around the Gaza Strip.

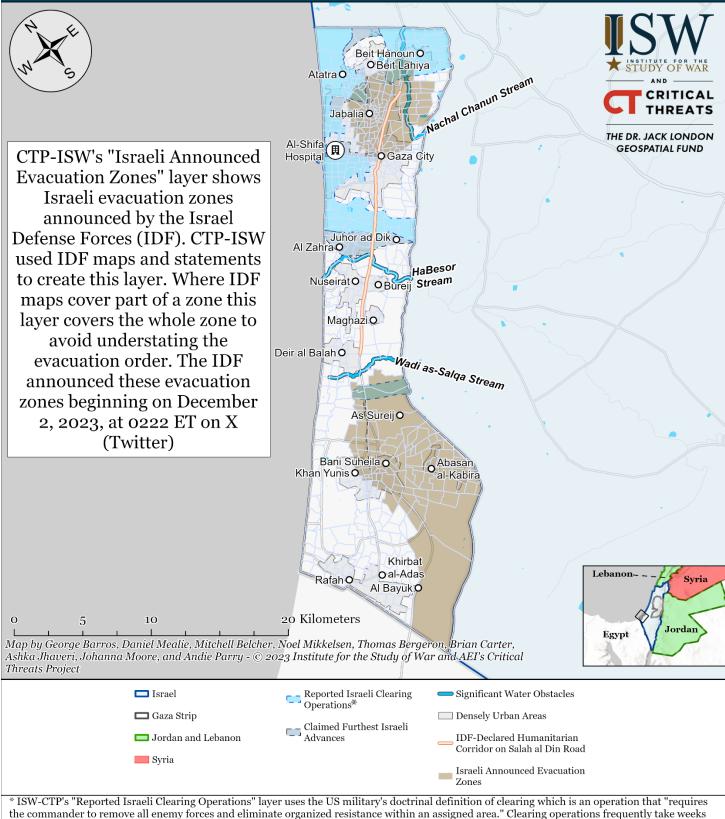
Palestinian militia fighters continued to use more sophisticated tactics to target Israeli forces throughout the Gaza Strip on December 5. This is consistent with the tactical shift CTP-ISW has observed since the end of the humanitarian pause.**[1]** The al Qassem Brigades—the militant wing of Hamas—claimed that its fighters detonated a house-borne improvised explosive device (HBIED) targeting Israeli forces east of Khan Younis on December 5.**[2]** The HBIED collapsed the building. The group claimed that it detonated multiple claymore-type, anti-personnel mines in an ambush east of Khan Younis on December 5.**[3]** The al Qassem Brigades also targeted an Israeli tank with an EFP north of Khan Younis on December 4.**[4]** Al Qassem Brigades fighters inside an Israeli cantonment filmed Israeli soldiers relaxing inside the position near Juhor ad Dik.**[5]** The group claimed that they filled a tunnel under the cantonment with explosives and detonated it "among 60 Israeli soldiers."**[6]**

Israeli forces moved eastward and secured the Salah al Din Road south of Deir al Balah on or before December 3. Satellite imagery published by the *New York Times* shows Israeli armor that moved east to west across Salah al Din Road before establishing cantonments on the west side of the road.[7] Israeli forces fought Palestinian fighters south of this area near Khan Younis on December 3 and 4, according to local witnesses, Israeli sources, and Palestinian media.[8] The IDF Arabic-language spokesperson declared the Salah al Din Road between southern Deir al Balah and Khan Younis a combat zone on December 2, which is consistent with Palestinian reports that Israeli forces were moving along the Salah al Din Road on December 3 and 4.[9] These reports suggest that Israeli forces moved south along the road toward Khan Younis.

Israeli forces entered urban areas in Khan Younis and Bani Suheila on December 5. The commander of the IDF Southern Command said on December 5 that the IDF is operating in the "core" of Khan Younis.[10] A Palestinian journalist reported that Israeli vehicles reached Muhatta and Municipality Park in northern Khan Younis on December 5.[11] The same source added that Israeli forces also moved to Rabea Road in eastern Bani Suheila.[12]

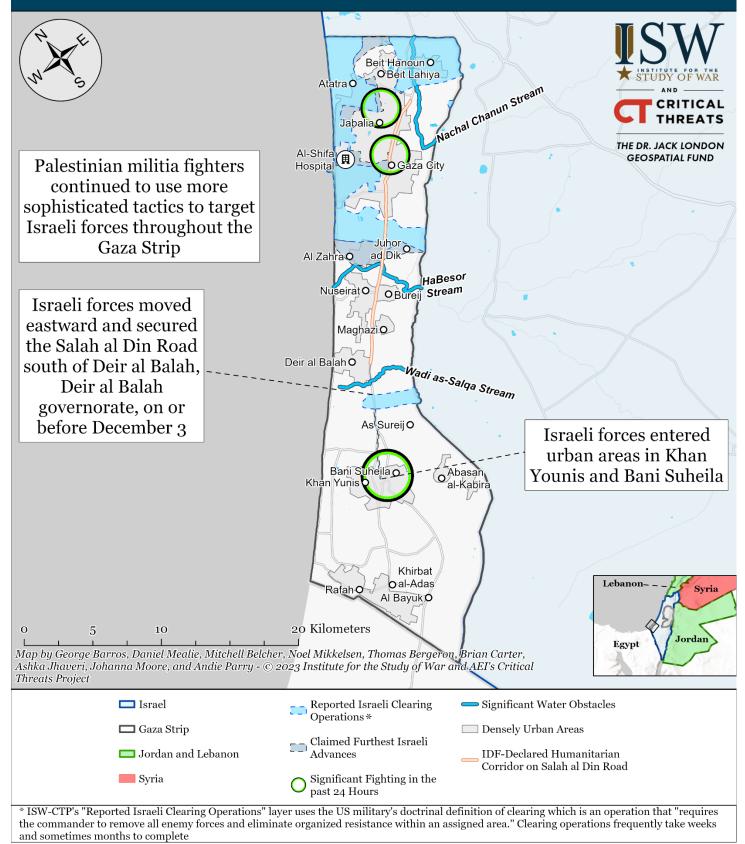
Palestinian militia forces, including the al Qassem Brigades and the al Quds Brigades, are attempting to resist the Israeli advance into Khan Younis governorate. The al Qassem Brigades detonated an EFP targeting Israeli armor north of Khan Younis city on December 4.[13] The al Qassem Brigades and the al Quds Brigades also claimed at least eighteen other attacks targeting Israeli forces along the Israeli "line of advance" north and east of the city on December 4 and 5.[14]

Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip as of December 5, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



and sometimes months to complete

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip as of December 5, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



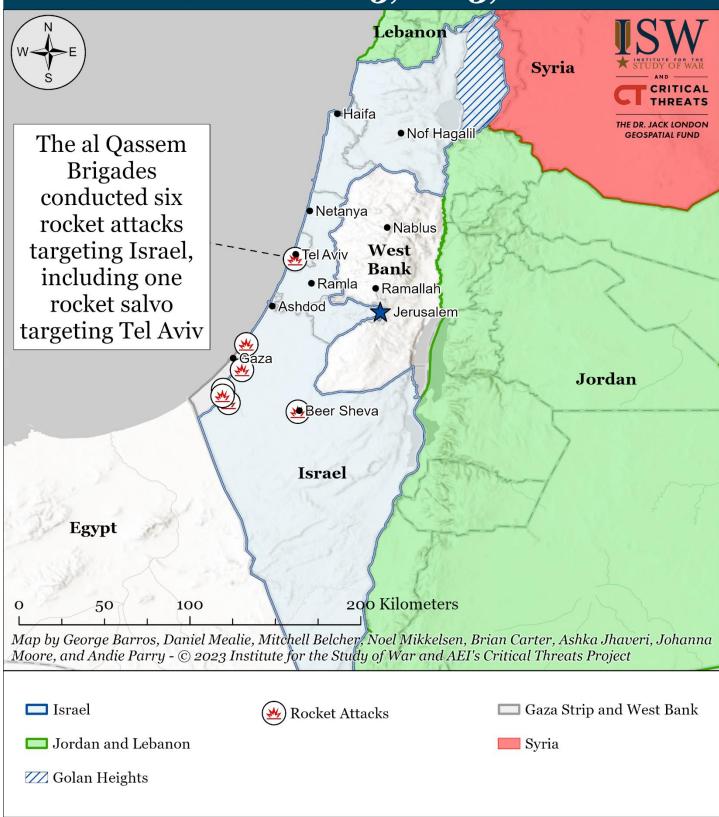
Israeli forces continued their advance into Jabalia and Shujaiya on December 5. The commander of the IDF Southern Command said on December 5 that the IDF is operating in the "core" of Shujaiya and Jabalia—similarly to how he announced Israeli operations in the "core" of Khan Younis.[15] The IDF also reported that its forces are operating in the Jabalia neighborhood after they encircled the area.[16] This is consistent with Palestinian militia claims. The al Quds Brigades reported that its forces fired tandem rockets at IDF vehicles near the Sanafour Roundabout and on Mushtaha Street in Shujaiya neighborhood on December 5. Geolocated footage posted on December 5 also showed IDF armor moving south through northern Jabalia.[17] The al Quds Brigades also targeted Israeli forces moving through the al Fallujah area, west of Jabalia.[18]

Palestinian militia fighters continued attacks targeting Israeli forces behind the Israeli forward line of advance, which is consistent with the nature of clearing operations. A Gaza Strip-based news outlet reported fighting in Juhor ad Dik, Beit Hanoun, Shati Camp, Beit Lahia, Tal al Hawa, and Zaytoun on December 5.[19]

The Wall Street Journal reported that Israel is preparing a system of pumps to flood Hamas' tunnel system with seawater.[20] The report said that Israel informed the United States in early November that it was considering the tactic and that Israel assembled at least five pumps north of Shati Camp in mid-November.[21] The Wall Street Journal said that US officials held "mixed" opinions regarding the plan, with some officials expressing concern over the plan and others supporting Israeli efforts to disable the tunnels. US officials told the outlet that they did not know when Israel would execute the plan but that Israel had not yet made a final decision to use the pumps.

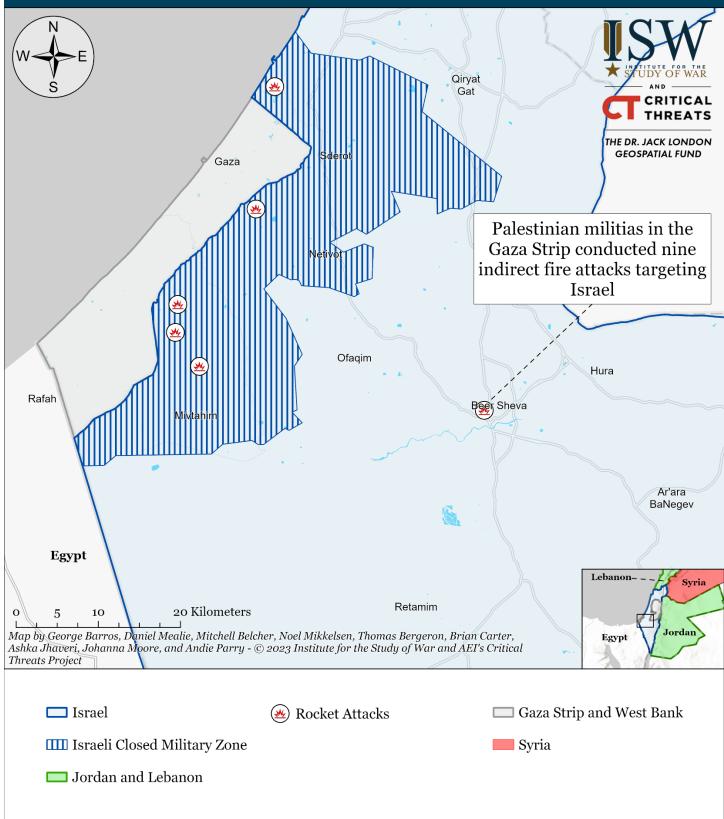
USAID Administrator Samantha Power arrived in Egypt to meet with Egyptian officials and humanitarian organizations.[22] Power arrived alongside 36,000 pounds of US-provided food assistance and medical supplies. USAID said that Power will highlight the US commitment to protecting civilians and the "absolute necessity" for the levels of humanitarian assistance reaching the Gaza Strip to "continue at, and exceed, the levels reached during the humanitarian pause."

Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of December 5, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of December 5, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Palestinian militias in the Gaza Strip conducted nine indirect fire attacks into Israel on December 5. The al Qassem Brigades conducted six rocket attacks targeting Israel, including one rocket salvo targeting Tel Aviv.[23] The al Quds Brigades conducted two rocket attacks targeting southern Israel.[24]

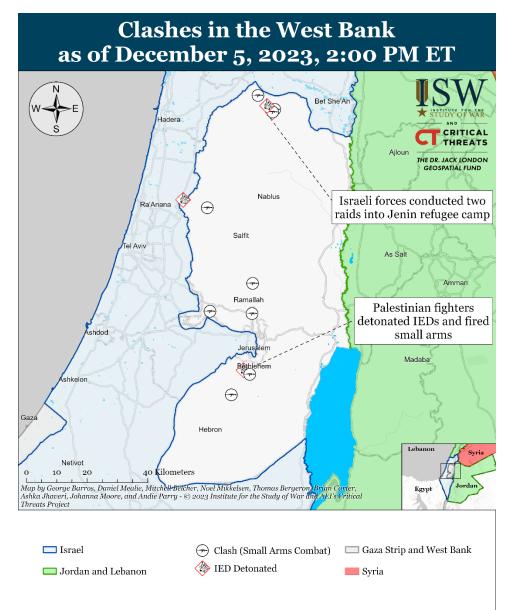
West Bank

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

• Draw IDF assets and resources toward the West Bank and fix them there

Israeli forces and Palestinian fighters clashed in nine towns across the West Bank on December 5.[25] This level of violence is consistent with the daily average rate of clashes in the West Bank over the last seven days. Palestinian fighters clashed twice with Israeli forces conducting large-scale raids in Jenin.[26] Israel informed the Palestinian Authority that Israeli forces' activity in Jenin would last up to 72 hours, according to a Palestinian journalist.[27] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades—the self-proclaimed militant wing of Fatah—conducted two IED attacks during the Jenin raids.[28] The group claimed four of the nine clashes on December 5.[29] The group also announced the death of one of its commanders in the clashes with Israeli forces. [30] Palestinian fighters conducted two IED attacks against Israeli forces in other areas of the West Bank as well.[31]

The IDF said that its forces arrested 21 wanted persons in the West Bank on December 5.[32] The Palestinian Prisoners' and Ex-Prisoners' Affairs Authority, which is part of the Palestinian Authority, said Israel arrested 40 Palestinians.[33]

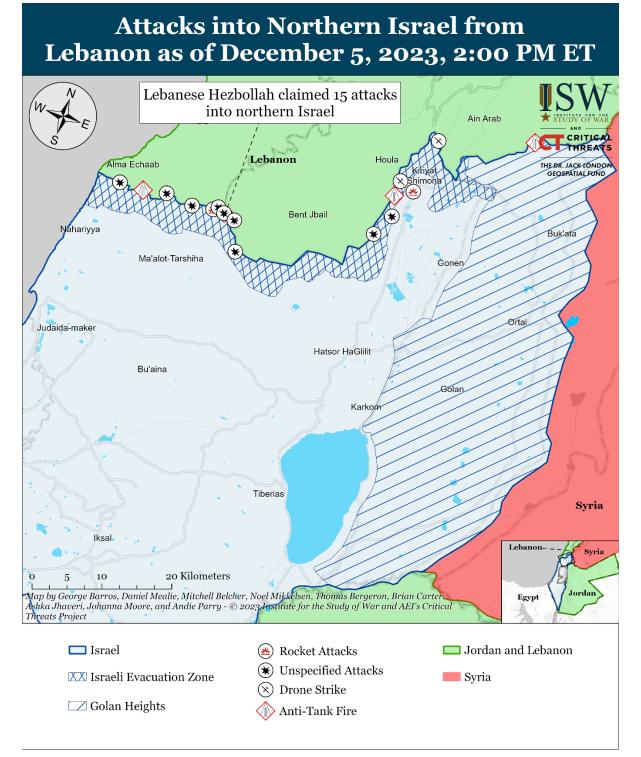


This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Draw IDF assets and resources toward northern Israel and fix them there
- Set conditions for successive campaigns into northern Israel

Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) claimed 15 attacks into Israeli territory from Lebanon on December 5.[34] This rate of attacks is consistent with the daily average. LH exclusively targeted Israeli military sites along the Lebanese border. The IDF reported that a "hostile aircraft" crossed into Israeli airspace and was recovered by the IDF near Margaliot.[35] Unidentified militants conducted two separate rocket attacks into Israel toward Zerait and Kiryat Shemona.[36]



Iran and Axis of Resistance Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Demonstrate the capability and willingness of Iran and the Axis of Resistance to escalate against the United States and Israel on multiple fronts
- Set conditions to fight a regional war on multiple fronts

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) held a funeral ceremony in Tehran on December 5 for two IRGC Quds Force general officers killed in Syria.[37] Israel conducted airstrikes into southern Syria on December 2, killing two members of the IRGC Quds Force Unit 340.[38] This branch of the Quds Force is responsible for transferring technical military capabilities to members of the Axis of Resistance. Current and former high-ranking IRGC officials attended the funeral ceremony for the two general officers killed, including:

- IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami;
- Quds Force Commander Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani;
- Sarallah Operational Headquarters Commander Brigadier General Mohammad Hossein Nejat;
- Former Ambassador to Iraq and Quds Force officer Brigadier General Eraj Masjidi; and
- IRGC Commander Adviser and former IRGC Intelligence Organization Director Hossein Taeb.[39]

It is normal for IRGC leaders to attend the funeral ceremonies for IRGC officers killed in Syria. The IRGC confirmed on December 2 that Israel killed the two general officers.[40]

US CENTCOM reported that unspecified actors launched 15 122mm rockets from Iraq at the US forces at the Rumalyn Landing Zone in Syria on December 3.[41] The Islamic Resistance of Iraq nor has any other actor claimed responsibility for the attack at the time of writing. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq previously claimed that it launched two one-way drones toward US positions around Rumalyn on November 11.[42]

Attacks against US Bases in the Middle East as of December 5, 2023, 2:00 PM ET Ν Rmelan Al Malikiya Mosul Dam Turkey CRITICAL HREATS Tal Baidar 3 Abu Hajar THE DR. JACK LONDON Airport **GEOSPATIAL FUND** Al Harir Air Base Al Shaddadi Conoco Mission Erbil International Airport Support Site Al Omar Oil Field and Green Village Syria Iran Lebanon Ain al Assad Airbase Al-Tanf Garrison Baghdad International Airpor Iraq Israel Rukban CENTCOM reported that unspecified militants fired rockets targeting US forces at the Rumalyn Landing Zone in Syria Jordan Saudi Arabia Kuwait 500 Kilometers 125 250 0 Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project +1 * Measured from October 18, 2023 Number of Attacks 18 15 12 9 6 ■ Confirmed by US Officials Claimed by Axis of Resistance 3 A Hait A. Erbil Inter. Tal Baidar Reported by 3rd Party Sources Al Malikiy. N Shaddad. Altant Ga. Ó. Momar

Note: The numbers placed inside the pie charts denote the total number of attacks. Locations that include an addition to its total number of attacks have red numbers above the bar graph and pie chart to represent new attacks against that location within the past 24 hours.

Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada Secretary General Abu Alaa al Walai condemned in a post on X (Twitter) on December 5 the US self-defense strike against Iranian-backed Iraqi militants on December 3.[43] US CENTCOM confirmed that the United States conducted a self-defense strike against five Iraqi militants planning a one-way drone attack on US forces near Kirkuk, Iraq, on December 3.[44] Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba (HHN) acknowledged that the killed individuals were members of the militia.[45] HHN Secretary General Akram al Kaabi threatened on December 4 to retaliate against US forces for the airstrike.[46]

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—circulated videos of the funeral ceremony for the five fighters on December 5.[47] The publication of these videos by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq is unsurprising given that HHN is one of its constituent militias. Several other members of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq broadcasted their presences at the funeral as well, showing solidarity with HHN. A large number of individuals at the ceremony carried the flags of Kataib Hezbollah (KH) and Kataib Seyyed ol Shohada. Asaib Ahl al Haq (AHH) flags were noticeably absent among the crowd, which is noteworthy given that KH has implicitly criticized the lack of AAH attacks on US positions since the Israel-Hamas war began.

Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian and Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov agreed to cooperate toward undermining international sanctions on December 5. The agreement is meant to promote cooperation between Iran and Russia to mitigate the negative economic effects of "unilateral coercive measures," including sanctions, according to Iranian state media.[48] Abdollahian and Lavrov made the agreement during an annual meeting of the foreign ministers of the Caspian Sea littoral states in Moscow. The meeting comes two days ahead of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's scheduled trip to Moscow to meet with his Russian counterparts and discuss economic relations and the Israel-Hamas war. Abdollahian separately repeated the regime's calls for a goods and energy embargo against Israel in the presence of the foreign ministers of Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan.

Artesh Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Erani traveled to Baku, Azerbaijan, on December 4 to discuss expanding defense and maritime cooperation with senior Azerbaijani defense and military officials.[49] Erani met with his Azerbaijani counterpart, Vice Admiral Subhan Bakirov, and Azerbaijani Defense Minister Colonel General Zakir Hasanov. Erani called for increasing combined training, exercises, and sea patrols between the Artesh and Azerbaijani navies.[50] Erani and Bakirov also emphasized the need for security in the Caspian Sea to increase trade and transit between the five Caspian littoral states. Erani visited several Azerbaijani Navy units and training centers. Tensions have flared between Tehran and Baku over several different issues in recent years, including Iranian leaders' accusation that Azerbaijan allows Israeli intelligence agents to operate in its territory.[51] Some Iranian leaders have softened their criticisms toward Azerbaijan in recent weeks, however. Artesh Coordination Deputy Brigadier General Habibollah Sayyari claimed on November 30 that Israel has withdrawn its forces from the Caucasus amid the Israel-Hamas war.[52]

Houthi President Mehdi al Mashat stated that the Houthi movement will continue to target Israel until it stops its attacks into the Gaza Strip.[53] Mashat previously stated on November 29 that US military pressure against the Houthi movement would not change its policies toward the Israel-Hamas conflict.[54]



[1] https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-december-3-2023

[2] https://t.me/qassam1brigades/657

[4] https://t.me/qassam1brigades/637

[5] https://x.com/ytirawi/status/1732040636277354661?s=20

[6] https://x.com/ytirawi/status/1732040636277354661?s=20

[7] https://www.nytimes.com/live/2023/12/04/world/israel-hamas-war-gaza-news?smid=url-share#israel-southern-gaza-invasion

[8] https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-december-3-

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[9] https://www.thedefensepost.com/2023/12/04/israel-tanks-southern-gaza/?expand article=1;

https://twitter.com/Doron_Kadosh/status/1731329603845697575

[10] https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1732037139276464456

[11] https://x.com/ytirawi/status/1731959474397540681?s=20

[12] https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1731959474397540681

[13] https://t.me/qassam1brigades/637

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^[3] https://t.me/qassam1brigades/658; https://t.me/qassam1brigades/659

[14] https://t.me/gassam1brigades/658; https://t.me/gassam1brigades/657; https://t.me/gassam1brigades/656; https:// t.me/qassam1brigades/655; https://t.me/qassam1brigades/653; https://t.me/qassam1brigades/652; https://t.me/qassa m1brigades/651; https://t.me/qassam1brigades/647; https://t.me/qassam1brigades/646; https://t.me/qassam1brigades/ 645; https://t.me/gassam1brigades/644; https://t.me/saravaps/16813; https://t.me/saravaps/16811; https://t.me/sarava ps/16809; https://t.me/qassam1brigades/640; https://t.me/qassam1brigades/639; https://t.me/sarayaps/16806; https:// /t.me/qassam1brigades/637 [15] https://twitter.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1732068271770210600 [16] https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1731936414969872522 [17] https://x.com/beardeddragonil/status/1731979962083664280?s=20 [18] https://t.me/sarayaps/16807 [19] https://t.me/beitlahiaNews/9413 [20] https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/israel-weighs-plan-to-flood-gaza-tunnels-with-seawatera375ddob?mod=middle-east news article pos3 [21] https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/israel-weighs-plan-to-flood-gaza-tunnels-with-seawatera375ddob?mod=middle-east news article pos3 [22] https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/dec-05-2023-administrator-samantha-power-arrivesegypt [23] https://t.me/qassam1brigades/648; https://t.me/qassam1brigades/650; https://t.me/qassam1brigades/638; https://t.me/qassam1brigades/642; https://t.me/qassam1brigades/643; https://t.me/hamasps/18105 [24] https://t.me/sarayaps/16817 [25] https://www.idf dot il/159167; https://t.me/kataebaqsapalestine/2504; https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1731848015554420965; https://t.me/kataebaqsapalestine/2502; https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1731803329817116973; https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1731764393455628666; https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1731750952183419088; https://t.me/newpress1/60784; https://t.me/QudsN/339545 [26] https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1732017906886586688; https://t.me/kataebaqsapalestine/2498; https://t.me/kataebagsapalestine/2506; https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1731793604799058187 [27] https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1731798145107902863 [28] https://www.dot.idf.il/159167; https://t.me/kataebaqsapalestine/2499; https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1731837031821554107; https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1731750952183419088; https://t.me/kataebagsapalestine/2507 [29] https://t.me/kataebaqsapalestine/2506; https://t.me/kataebaqsapalestine/2502; https://t.me/kataebagsapalestine/2504; https://t.me/kataebagsapalestine/2498 [30] https://t.me/kataebagsapalestine/2504 [31] https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1731837031821554107; https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1731750952183419088 [32] https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1731941655081607465 [33] https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1731963966329385305 [34] https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1731791049977184431; https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1731963313196527726 ; https://t.me/C_Military1/40782 ; https://t.me/C_Military1/40784 ; https://t.me/C_Military1/40786 ; https://t.me/C_Military1/40790; https://t.me/C_Military1/40829; https://t.me/C_Military1/40829; https://t.me/C_Military1/40832; https://t.me/C_Military1/40834; https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1732048178407448965; https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1732050106763932029; https://t.me/C Military1/40841: https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1732054087066128535: https://t.me/C Military1/40840; https://t.me/mihwar almuqawama/41691; https://t.me/C Military1/40851; https://t.me/C_Military1/40846; https://t.me/C_Military1/40856 [35] https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1731985756518862871; https://t.me/C Military1/40801 [36] https://t.me/C_Military1/40856; https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1731828306201227305 [37] https://defapress dot ir/fa/news/635541 [38] https://x.com/no_itsmyturn/status/1730823918976401654?s=20; https://x.com/SAMSyria0/status/1730918942883958789?s=20 [39] https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/media/1402/09/14/3000547 [40] https://defapress dot ir/fa/news/634886 [41] https://x.com/CENTCOM/status/1731788749489471798?s=20 [42] https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-november-11-2023-65502ac81757f [43] https://twitter.com/aboalaa alwalae/status/1732027622366826659 [44] https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/STATEMENTS/Statements-View/Article/3605897/us-central-commandengages-militants-in-self-defense/ [45] https://www.shafaq dot com/ar/%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%80%D9%86/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%AC%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B9%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA-14 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project 2023

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[46] https://www.shafaq dot

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[47] https://t.me/elamharbi/143

[48] https://www.farsnews dot ir/news/14020914000719

[49] https://www.isna dot ir/news/1402091409921

[50] https://www.farsnews dot ir/news/14020914000350

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[52] https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1402/09/09/2997930

[53] https://www.irna dot ir/news/85312944

[54] https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-november-29-2023;

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